

## COMMENT

There is a great story in the Art of Eddie Burrup that properly told and researched could expand our critical consciousness of what it means to be an artist in Australia.

Elizabeth Durack's intuitive vision of the land and its people places her in a category entirely her own – I can think of none other.

Her artistic motivation has been shaped and influenced by art and by experiences other than European – it reaches back into the remote past, discovering and recognising tentacular roots revealed through a lifetime of association, of experiences, of memories, of friendships made, of anecdotes related and of adventures heard in the twilight of an obsolete ontology and the now lost world of Australia's early pastoral enterprise.

... Elizabeth Durack refers to The Art of Eddie Burrup as being her 'last creative phase' and this is important as it places recent developments within the evolution of her work as a whole rather than seeing it as a departure or an aberration unrelated to what went before, for it must be abundantly clear to anyone who is interested in Elizabeth Durack's work that Eddie Burrup has been living in her, with her and expressing himself through her for a very long time – albeit in a less independent way than of late.

His gestation and the course of his evolution can be traced chronologically and sequentially right up to that 'last creative phase' when he bursts like Athene from Zeus' forehead fully formed although, alas, unarmed, or, to lengthen the metaphor, armed only with a spear – ill-matched against the firepower of the electronic media ...

Eddie Burrup is, in effect, a whole shared lifetime of living, learning, loving the land and its people ... he was there all through the various phases – back some 60 years – in *The Way of the Whirlwind*, in the *Legendary Tales* illustrations, in the *Cord to Aitcheringa*, in *Love Magic*, and in the *Chant to Kaiddaicha* suites.

He could be seen as drawing closer in the series *Landscape into Figures / Figures into Landscape* and in the melted images of the 1960s ...

Then by the 1970s his restless spirit is becoming more assertive – we see it in the passage of the *Flightless Birds* ... that move on to raise the wind for the wild landscapes of *The Rim*, *the Rim of our brittle and*

*disintegrating world. The Rim and beyond and Beyond the Rim ... The Centre cannot hold ... Who would have guessed so many would be so co-operative?*

By the late 1970s the same restless spirit conjures up the *Discoverers and Explorers* suite wherein thin black lines on white canvas spread out to trace new and tentative maps pursuing a new and tentative exploration of *Terra Incognita* ...

Then, suddenly, late in 1994 he and the 'last creative phase' are upon us – on his own now – Eddie Burrup and Elizabeth speak the one language, express the one vision, tell the same story: they have joined now in the landscape as one – dust to dust, ashes to ashes ... it is now his memory and his voice that speaks with such authority from the *Ngarangani*, from the camp fires, from the *Thaloo* places and from all the old station sites in ruin and disrepair – he it is now who traces the course of the rivers, defines and identifies the landmarks and reads the landscape.

This process, this progress, of how Eddie Burrup came into being is the single most important issue in the work of Elizabeth Durack and of compelling interest. It is new and it is challenging.

Eddie Burrup – the story of Eddie Burrup and the Art of Eddie Burrup – is a resource. Much of what it contains is no longer retrievable. With it elliptical time as obtained in the *Ngarangani* is reasserted and who can say that a new paradigm for reconciliation has now been defined.

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Jeff Chunuma Rainyerri with his 'old mummy' – July 1999